

PLOTINIAN PERSONALITY VII — INDWELLING

Marc Edmund Jones

This lesson in the Enneads of Plotinus is a consideration of Problems of the Soul (I) through sections eighteen to twenty-two of the tractate, and the ultimate fullness of living is here the proper employment of the mental faculties by the personality. There is a distinction to be made between real intellection that is a creative intuition or direct knowing by the soul or the consciousness and the discursive reasoning that is the means of vicarious or imaginative experience. Intellection is conveniently known by consciousness through a mental operation, although it is in fact the immediate higher perception or whole-knowing of any given level of the being. It is as striking in the instinct of lower life as in the divine revelation to some exalted personage. The mental operation as such is an ordering of intangible objects in the fashion of the tangible world of everyday, and the substance of these intangible objects is language or words. Plotinus shows that reason as referring to the discursive faculty only belongs to the material world because it must employ words and thus accept that limitation of physical existence in which words arise. Words are not realities of themselves, although like all existence they conform to the general patterning of reality and so show relation in principle. Literally they are the total product of experience. Even within the limitations of basic fixed meaning they take on the immediate connotation of their use and often are more faithful to the erroneously of a living usage than to their academic definition. The word is the soul of the given experience as such, and reason of the movement from experience through experience to choice or decision is the free or inner contemplation by which personality exercises its individuality. Actual experience is involvement in the separateness of matter. Reasoning is a vicarious participation that leaves the self more allied to soul and more disposed to choice than possible in the confusion of common objectivity. Personality therefore is largely self-interpreted in words, and New Thought in consequence demands correct affirmation as the basis of correct living. The reason faculty is ideally of the highest intuition, but the occasion is always in the world of everyday. In knowing as caught in words experience in the known or articulate reality of the race itself.

The dynamic of consciousness is the sense of the eternal word or an articulate creativeness to match the voiced experience of discursive reasoning. In common life this need to express experience is the basis of social aggregation. The injured man must air his grievance, the child speak for self-reassurance of being, love tell itself to its object of affection and life thus ensouling itself in immediate

value or present significance. To become sensitive, Plotinus teaches, is to become of parts or experience-seeking in the self. There is no unity in specialized functions as such, or in meeting the world of division with division, but there is the convenient surface or transient unity of the word that gives momentary satisfaction to men in labels and affiliations of social concept. The higher reality or ultimate reality is first experienced in the words by which the consciousness awakens to its unifying.

The sustaining value in personality is the articulation of creativeness or the voicing of self to an accompaniment of the higher channelship through self, that is, in the word of a life lived in dedication to principle and its expression. In a very exact way it may be said that the higher is thus an indwelling or an ensoulment of soul by its own higher articulation and its own capture of itself in concept or living word. The soul finds definitely located functions in the organs of the body, but it must operate in wholeness and without accepted limitation of place. Soul only acts in a located reality in the whole voicing of experience in awareness.

The social genius of the soul is found in the fact that it permeates body while yet embracing the totality of possible bodily experience. The flesh is limited to immediate situation, but the inner faculties through the agency of the words born of experience may share every potentiality. Soul is loosely said to be in body but in reality body exists in soul. Articulation through bodily operation is a universalization of specialized experience. The specialization creates knowing, but knowing must certify itself by its generalization. Discursive reason is the act of generalizing the particular or contemplating it this way and that and moving from one to another possibility, and in his mental anguish man gains the clear realization that expresses an indwelling of his soul's highest rather than any defensive uncertainty of embodied experience. Intuition is more direct and of itself more certain, but its continuing realization is lost if there are no words or experience for its anchorage. Only indwelling by the soul of actual livingness can sustain reality. The practical aspect of personality is its ultimate fidelity to the experienced reality gained vicariously through ideal participation as well as known personally. It is fidelity to the concept substantiating his expression of higher indwelling through the life. Personality is normally as good as its word, and its word or articulation of itself is its committal. Men can build their social state because in general they can count on the human word. Indeed, all experience is expanded by the concepts of relationship in verbal explanations or terms of sentiment and expressions of loyalty and the like. Plotinus demands that the soul be seen as something of this permeating good-as-its-word emphasis throughout life, or an indwelling directive force. He insists that soul is more than skill acting through instruments or science using the things at its

hand. It is the articulation of eternal indwelling, and so is the voice of eternity.

The individuality of personality lies in its permeation of its total world. If the soul contains body, which Plotinus holds as best expression of the relationship, the containment is no constriction of the soul to body but rather is a linking of body to the whole environment touched by soul. In this sense words are of soul because they bind men in consciousness and bridge physical limitation or expand purely material relations. Soul penetrates to every part of body in the sense of offering all embodiment in order to continue the articulation of that larger life in which embodiment must participate. The ultimate distinction of personality is the soul's freedom from limitation by any particular part of body. Not held by the location of visible individuality, it is linked in consciousness as the direction of the being suggests. Personality goes with body to take the indwelling of any exalted moment or to share such as a word of encouragement in lesser situation. Plotinus shows that in sensitiveness the soul is present to the entire sensitive being. Therefore self's indwelling is always a unification in free articulation. For purposes of act differentiation begins, in Plotinian terms, and in act the division of self or its specialized articulation is manifest in the moment of experience. But following act there remains realization and the word in which experience continues.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- (1) What two mental faculties does personality employ? By what names are these known? How are they to be compared? What does Plotinus say about words or their function, their limitations and their relation to personality?
- (2) What is meant by the creative word? How does it act as the dynamic of consciousness? How does personality speak the word creatively?
- (3) In what ways may men have experience of unity? Which represents the expression of personality? Why? How does the higher effect an indwelling? In and of what?
- (4) How does this indwelling use the word? How does soul dwell both in and out of body? How does it function in either place? Why is intuition dependent on words? To what extent is personality dependent on reality? What forms may this reality take?
- (5) What is personality's word? How does soul articulate the word? What is the relation of soul and body? Why are words part of this relation? When and why does division of self occur? What precedes and follows this differentiation?